

Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 13 March 2025

Call in Request – Maintenance and Management of Hurst Spit

Purpose	For Review
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>Following a call-in by Councillor Jack Davies and as per 4/8 of the Constitution, Call in Procedures for Executive Decisions, the Panel are to consider the Portfolio Holder Decision – Maintenance and Management of Hurst Spit.</p> <p>Implementation of the decision shall not be affected.</p>
Recommendation	1. That the Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel consider the Call-In request and provide its views on the Portfolio Holder Decision to the Leader and the Council.
Reasons for recommendation	To comply with the Council's Call-In procedures for Executive Decisions as set out in 4/8 of the Constitution.
Wards	Milford and Hordle, Pennington and Lymington
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Geoff Blunden – Environment and Sustainability
Strategic Director	<p>Alan Bethune – Corporate Resources and Transformation (S151)</p> <p>James Carpenter – Place, Operations and Sustainability</p>
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Introduction and background

1. The Portfolio Holder Decision report considers the current and future management and maintenance of Hurst Spit that may or may not be undertaken by NFDC.
2. This follows the completion of recent engagement (November 2024) of the draft preferred pathways for the Hurst Spit to Lymington Coastal Strategy. The engagement has resulted in there being increased media interest and information requests to NFDC regarding past, current and future management of Hurst Spit, that has historically been undertaken by NFDC.
3. Hurst Spit is located at the eastern end of Christchurch Bay, forming the boundary with the Western Solent. Historically the Spit has been maintained by NFDC, particularly since the completion of the capital project undertaken in 1996.
4. Although NFDC has no Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk (FCERM) duty or land ownership responsibilities to undertake maintenance works, they have in the past been undertaken under the powers of the Coast Protection Act (1949) and when NFDC has been in receipt of grant-in-aid (GIA) funding and the necessary licences. As the ability to attract sufficient GIA funding has now significantly reduced, along with a lack of contribution funding from landowners and other organisations, NFDC can no longer commit to undertaking any required maintenance works.

Portfolio Holder Decision

5. On 19 February 2025, Councillor Geoff Blunden, the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability made the following decision:
 - That it be noted that NFDC is not a landowner of Hurst Spit and that NFDC has no statutory duty to undertake FCERM.
 - That when maintenance and repair work is required to Hurst Spit, NFDC approach those landowners and organisations that have an operational interest in Hurst Spit to gauge their interest and likely financial support to enable repair works to be undertaken.

- That NFDC will consider undertaking maintenance and repair works to Hurst Spit if in receipt of external funding (Grant in aid or other) and if works are required to protect against flood and erosion risk and if the appropriate licences and permissions are in place.
 - That the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability write to the Secretary of State for Environment Food and Rural Affairs to express concerns over the potential impacts of damage to Hurst Spit and the lack of funding provision to undertake repair works.
6. The decision was made due to a lack of external funding. NFDC could not commit a budget to undertaking maintenance works on an asset that it has no responsibility for. However, should funding become available through GIA or other external contributions then NFDC will consider undertaking maintenance works.
 7. The full details of the reasons why the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability made the decision can be found in the report at **Appendix 1**.

Call-In

8. Following the publication of the Portfolio Holder Decision on 19 February 2025, Cllr Jack Davies submitted a call-in. Cllr Davies' reason for calling-in the matter was that he thinks the decision '*needs greater scrutiny*'.
9. As per paragraph 4.1 of the call-in procedures for executive decisions, if one member calls in an executive decision, the matter shall be placed on the agenda for the next programmed meeting of the appropriate Panel for discussion. The appropriate Panel in this instance is the Place and Sustainability O&S Panel. Cllr Jack Davies will also be entitled to speak on the item but not vote. The implementation of the decision shall not be affected.
10. Paragraph 5.1 of the call-in procedures specifies that the Panel are to consider the Portfolio Holder Decision and report its views direct to the Leader and the Council.

Implications and Impact Assessments

11. All relevant implications and impact assessments in respect of the decision are identified within the Portfolio Holder Decision report, at Appendix 1.

Conclusion

12. In accordance with the Council's Call-In procedures, the Panel are asked to consider the Portfolio Holder Decision and report its views direct to the Leader and the Council.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Report – Portfolio Holder Decision – Maintenance & Management of Hurst Spit.